

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT YO

SUBJ: ARRESTS IN YUGOSLAVIA

1. WHILE THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA HAVE REPORTED AT LENGTH ON THE SEVEN YEAR PRISON TERM OF YUGOSLAV MIHAJLO MIHAJLOV AND TO A LESSER EXTENT ON THE ONE YEAR SENTENCE GIVEN LAWYER SRDJAN POPOVIC, THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN STRUCK BY WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN INCREASING NUMBER OF YUGOSLAVS WHO HAVE BEEN GIVEN PRISON SENTENCES FOR OFFENSES WHICH IN MOST WESTERN COUNTRIES WOULD NOT BE ACTIONABLE AT ALL. IN FEB AND MAR OF THIS YEAR WE HAVE NOTED NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS CONCERNING THE IMPRISONMENT OF 24 SUCH PERSONS, AS COMPARED TO A TOTAL OF SEVEN IN THE PRIOR SIX MONTHS. IN BOTH PERIODS WE HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY MISSED SEEING SOME NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS, AND IT IS ALMOST CERTAINLY TRUE THAT MANY TRIALS GO UNREPORTED. SOME OF THESE CASES HAVE BEEN INDIVIDUALLY REPORTED BY THE EMBASSY.

2. SENTENCES AND OFFENSES RANGE FROM TWO MONTHS IMPRISON-

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MENT FOR "SINGING NATIONALIST AND CHAUVINIST SONGS AT A

WEDDING" TO SIX AND ONE HALF YEARS (ALMOST AS MUCH AS MIHAJLOV'S SENTENCE) FOR "MALICIOUSLY AND UNTRUTHFULLY PRESENTING THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS" OF YUGOSLAVIA IN LETTERS. MOST OF THE PRISONERS HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH "HOSTILE ACTIVITY" OR "HOSTILE PROPAGANDA", WHICH HAS INCLUDED "PRESENTING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN A DISTORTED LIGHT" (FIVE YEARS)", "RIDICULING THE HIGHEST LEADERSHIP AND SPEAKING UNTRUTHS " (15 MONTHS), "INSTIGATING NATIONALIST INTOLERANCE" (TWO AND ONE-HALF YEARS), AND "SLANDERING THE SOCIAL SYSTEM" (INDIVIDUAL NOT YET SENTENCED).

3. WE HAVE NOT INCLUDED IN THE ABOVE FIGURES ANYONE ACCUSED OF ORGANIZING OPPOSITION GROUPS OR ACCUSED OF HAVING EVEN THE REMOTEST CONNECTION WITH EMIGRES. ALL ARE INDIVIDUALS WHO SEEM TO HAVE BEEN PROSECUTED SIMPLY FOR MAKING INDISCREET STATEMENTS.

4. COMMENT: LACKING FULL ACCESS TO INFORMATION, WE CANNOT SAY WITH CERTAINTY THAT THE NUMBER OF SUCH PROSECUTIONS HAS IN FACT INCREASED. IN ANY CASE, HOWEVER, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT NUMEROUS ORDINARY CITIZENS OF YUGOSLAVIA, IN ADDITION TO MIHAJLOV AND POPOV, ARE BEING IMPRISONED FOR VERY MINOR OFFENSES;AND THAT THE LAWS AGAINST "HOSTILE ACTIVITY" CAN COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS.
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